AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) ~~In combination, an~~ An auxiliary sample handler for retaining a plurality of auxiliary patient sample containers ~~samples and a clinical analyzer, said clinical analyzer including:~~

~~a primary sample handler having at least one patient sample container;~~

~~at least one metering mechanism for aspirating and dispensing patient sample fluids from said primary sample handler and said auxiliary sample handler;~~

~~a first chemistry system and a second chemistry system, each of said chemistry systems including at least one reaction vessel that receives a patient sample and at least one analytical instrument for determining a property of said patient sample,~~ said auxiliary sample handler comprising:

a housing that includes a plurality of ~~first~~ tip retaining stations;

a housing cover sized to cover each of said tip retaining stations;

a drive mechanism used to rotate said tip retaining stations about an axis of rotation;

a plurality of ~~sealed~~ metering tips disposed in said plurality of ~~first~~ tip retaining stations, each of said metering tips being configured to retain a quantity of sample liquid from a primary sample handler of a clinical analyzer and therein act as an auxiliary sample container, each of said metering tips including a dispense end;

a sealing mechanism disposed on said housing for sealing the dispense end of each of said metering tips containing sample liquid;

a tip stripping mechanism disposed in said housing cover for sequentially removing each said sealed metering tip from a metering mechanism of a clinical analyzer; and

an aspiration station including an opening in said housing cover to permit selective access to at least one sealed metering tip in order to permit aspiration therefrom, said drive mechanism being configured to rotate said tip retaining stations into position with said aspiration station

~~a plurality of second tip retaining stations; and~~

~~a plurality of unsealed metering tips disposed in said plurality of second tip retaining stations, wherein each of said plurality of sealed and unsealed metering tips~~

~~has a sealed dispense end, wherein a portion of said plurality of unsealed metering tips initially aspirate a volume of patient sample from a patient sample container of said primary sample handler and dispense a portion of said patient sample onto a reaction vessel of said first chemistry system prior to sealing said dispense end, thereby creating said sealed metering tips, each of said sealed metering tips serving as a sample container that is used by said second chemistry system of said clinical analyzer for aspiration of patient sample therefrom in lieu of the patient sample containers of said primary sample handler so as to permit asynchronous operation of said analyzer, at least another portion from said plurality of unsealed metering tips being used in conjunction with said at least one metering mechanism to aspirate fluid from a fluid supply of said second chemistry system for dispensing said fluid into a reaction vessel of said second chemistry system~~.

2. (Canceled).

3. (Canceled).

4. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1 ~~3~~, wherein said sealing mechanism includes at least one heated element ~~disposed in relation to said plurality of first tip retaining stations~~.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1, including ~~a testing system for testing the sample retained within a sealed metering tip~~ an optical instrument disposed in said housing for measuring at least one optical property of sample liquid contained in each of said plurality of metering tips, said drive mechanism being configured to selectively move each of said tip retaining stations in relation to said optical instrument.

7. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 6, wherein said ~~testing system includes~~ optical instrument is a spectrophotometer.

8. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1, wherein said plurality of ~~first~~ tip retaining stations are disposed on a ~~first~~ ring.

9. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 8, including a second ring having a ~~said~~ plurality of ~~second~~ tip retaining stations disposed thereupon.

10. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 9, wherein said first ring and said second ring are concentric.

11. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 10, wherein each of said first and second rings is independently driven about a common axis of rotation.

12. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 11, wherein each of said rings is bi-directionally rotatable about said common axis of rotation.

13. (Canceled).

14. (Canceled).

15. (Withdrawn) A clinical analyzer for testing patient fluids, said analyzer comprising:

a housing;

at least one chemistry system retained within said housing;

first sample handling means for handling a plurality of first patient sample containers; and

second sample handling means for retaining a plurality of second patient sample containers, each of said sample handling means being interconnected with said at least one said chemistry system.

16. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 15, including first conveying means for conveying a quantity of sample from said first sample handling means to said at least one chemistry system.

17. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 16, wherein said first conveying means utilizes at least one metering tip, said metering tip being sized for aspirating a quantity of sample from a first sample container through a dispense end thereof.

18. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 17, wherein second sample handling means comprises said at least one metering tip having aspirated sample from said first sample container.

19. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 18, including means for sealing the dispense end of each of said metering tips containing aspirated sample prior to moving a said tip to said second sample handling means.

20. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 18, including means for optically testing the contents of each of said metering tips.

21. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 19, wherein said optical testing means are disposed within said second sample handling means.

22. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 18, wherein said second

sample handling means further includes a supply of unsealed metering tips, said supply of metering tips being interconnected to said first conveying means.

23. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 19, wherein each of said metering tips are disposable.

24. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 18, including a dump station for the second patient sample containers following use thereof.

25. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 19, wherein said second sample handling means includes at least one ring member, said at least one ring member having a plurality of stations for retaining a corresponding number of sealed metering tips, said at least one ring member being rotatably supported for movement about an axis of rotation.

26. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 25, including means for rotatably driving said at least one ring member bi-directionally about said axis of rotation.

27. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 25, wherein said second sample handling means includes a pair of concentric ring members, each of said ring members being rotatable about a common axis of rotation.

28. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 27, wherein each of said concentric ring members are driven independently of one another.

29. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 28, wherein one of said ring members include a plurality of stations, each station being sized for supporting a sealed sample containing metering tip.

30. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 29, wherein the other of said ring members includes a plurality of stations for supporting a plurality of unsealed metering tips, at least one station of said ring member being disposed along a travel path of said first conveying means to permit an unsealed metering tip to be conveyed to said first sample handling means to permit aspiration thereof.

31. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 19, including second conveying means for conveying sample contained in said at least one sealed metering tip in said second sample handling means to said at least one chemistry system for testing thereof.

32. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 18, wherein said first conveying means includes metering means for dispensing a portion of sample aspirated from said metering tip to a said chemistry system and then for conveying said tip to said second sample handling means.

33. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 19, wherein said tip sealer includes a heated element for fusing the dispense end of a sample containing metering tip.

34. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 21, wherein said second sample handling means includes at least one ring member, said at least one ring member having a plurality of stations for retaining said second sample containers, said optical testing means being disposed in relation to a predetermined position of said ring member.

35. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 34, further including a mechanism to align a lifted second sample container with an optical instrument of said optical testing means.

36. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 35, wherein said optical instrument is a spectrophotometer.

37. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 15, wherein said second sample handling means includes a ring member having a plurality of stations, said rotor being supported for rotation about an axis of rotation, said ring member being aligned with first and second conveying means for conveying sample from said second sample containers to said at least one chemistry system.

38. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 25, including at least one sensor or detecting whether station of said second sample handling means is empty prior to the placement of a sealed sample containing metering tip therein.

39. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 38, wherein said at least one sensor further detects whether said sealed tip has been successfully placed in the second sample handling means by said first conveying means.

40. (Withdrawn) The clinical analyzer of Claim 30, wherein the supply of unsealed metering tips is provided in an outer ring member and said second sample handling means is provided in an inner ring member.

41. (Canceled).
42. (Canceled).
43. (Canceled).
44. (Canceled).
45. (Canceled).
46. (Canceled).
47. (Canceled).
48. (Canceled).
49. (Canceled).
50. (Canceled).

51. (Canceled).

52. (Canceled).

53. (Canceled).

54. (Canceled).

55. (Canceled).

56. (Canceled).

57. (Canceled).

58. (Canceled).

59. (Canceled).

60. (Canceled).

61. (Withdrawn) A method for coordinating the use of a clinical analyzer, said analyzer having at least one contained chemistry system, said method including the steps of:

introducing a quantity of sample fluid into at least one metering tip;

sealing the dispense end of said at least one metering tip; and

utilizing said at least one sealed metering tip as a sample container for use with said at least one contained chemistry system of said analyzer.

62. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 61, wherein said introducing step includes the step of aspirating a quantity of sample fluid from a primary sample supply into said at least one metering tip.

63. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 62, wherein said primary sample supply includes a plurality of primary sample containers, said utilizing step includes the step of using said at least one metering tip as a secondary sample container.

64. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 62, including the step of dispensing a quantity of sample fluid for use in a chemistry system of said analyzer prior to said sealing step.

65. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 61, wherein said analyzer includes at least one dry chemistry system and at least one wet chemistry system.

66. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 65, wherein said at least one sealed tip is used in conjunction with the wet chemistry system of said analyzer.

67. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 61, including the step of testing the fluid contents contained within said at least one metering tip after said sealing step.

68. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 61, wherein said utilizing step includes the step of selectively aspirating a quantity of sample from said at least one sealed metering tip for use in said at least one contained chemistry system of said analyzer.

69. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 61, including the step of providing a plurality of sealed metering tips in an handling assembly, said assembly including a plurality of stations each sized for receiving a sealed metering tip.

70. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 69, including the step of conveying an unsealed metering tip to a first sample container from a tip supply prior to said aspiration step.

71. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 70, wherein said tip supply is provided on said handling assembly.

72. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 61, including the step of selectively disposing of said at least one sealed metering tip after a predetermined number of utilizing steps.

73. (Withdrawn) A method as recited in Claim 68, including the step of rotating said handling assembly in either a first direction or an opposite second direction relative to a rotational axis to move at least one sealed metering tip to an aspiration station.

74. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1, including a detection mechanism to detect when any ~~sample~~ tip retaining position of said auxiliary sample handler is empty.

75. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1, including a removal mechanism to remove sealed metering tips from ~~a first retaining position in~~ said ~~first~~ tip retaining station when testing is completed.

76. (Currently Amended) The ~~combination~~ auxiliary sample handler as recited in Claim 1, wherein the sealed metering tips used in the plurality of ~~first~~ tip retaining stations are the same sized metering tips used in the plurality of ~~second~~ tip retaining stations.

77. (Canceled).
78. (Canceled).
79. (Canceled).
80. (Canceled).
81. (Canceled).
82. (Canceled).